(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) The Government does not undertake import of sugar. Sugar is on O.G.L. (Open General Licence) and is freely importable as per commercial prudence of the importers. Besides, Government have facilitated import of raw sugar by sugar factories against Advance Licence under the prevailing EXIM policy.

Black-marketing at FPSs

†1877. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the black-marketing going on at Fair Price Shops;

(b) if so, the details of the steps being taken by Government to check it; and

(c) the total number of Fair Price Shops, throughout the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) The Targeted Public Distribution System functions through a vast network of Fair Price Shops. As such the possibility of black-marketing at some of the Fair Price Shops can not be ruled out. The following measures have been taken by the Government to check black marketing of foodgrains distributed under the TPDS:—

(i) The Public Distribution System (Control) Order, 2001 has been issued on 31st August, 2001 under Section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 with a view to curb wilful adulteration, substitution, diversion, theft of stocks from the Central godown to Fair Price Shops and at the premises of the Fair Price Shops etc.

(ii) States/UTs have been asked to actively involve the Gram Panchayats in rural areas and local bodies in urban areas in the monitoring of Fair Price Shops as a measure of social audit.

(iii) A model Citizen's Charter has been issued to all the States/UTs for adoption.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) There are at present 4.77 lakh Fair Price Shops in the country.

Quality checks during purchases by FCI

1878. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether quality checks are carried out before FCI purchases rice or foodgrains;

(b) if not, the reasons thereof;

(c) if so, the steps taken if the quality of the foodgrains is found to be below-standard;

(d) the action taken against persons who are found responsible;

(e) whether the view of the respective State Governments are also considered when the foodgrains are given for Public Distribution System through distributors; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes Sir. FCI procures rice or foodgrains strictly as per the quality specifications laid down by the Government of India.

(c) Whenever the quality of the foodgrains is found to be below-standard, strict disciplinary action is taken by FCI against the defaulters.

(d) The persons who are found responsible, strict action is taken depending upon their defaults ranging from censure to removal from services.

(e) and (f) Yes Sir. At the time of issue, ample opportunities are provided to the officials of the State Governments/UT Administrations to inspect the stocks prior to lifting from the FCI godowns. The Government have also issued instructions to all the State Governments/ UT Administrations that an officer not below the rank of Inspector should be deputed to check the quality of foodgrains before lifting from the FCI godowns.